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TEMPTING GOD

Brian Leftow

Western theism holds that God cannot do evil. Christians also hold that Christ is God the Son and that Christ was tempted to do evil. These claims appear to be jointly inconsistent. I argue that they are not.

It is standard Western theism to hold that God not only does no evil, but is impeccable—unable to do evil. For Christians, one prominent root of this claim is *James* 1:13, which states that

1. God cannot be tempted by evil.

Yet the New Testament also poses a puzzle for divine impeccability. It teaches that

2. Christ is God the Son.

Hebrews 4:15 states that

3. Christ was tempted in all ways as we are.¹

And

4. One way we are tempted is by evil.²

(2)–(4) seem inconsistent with (1). They also seem inconsistent with divine impeccability. How can someone impeccable be tempted to do evil? How could God be tempted to do something He cannot do? After all, I cannot be tempted to make it the case that $2 + 2 = 5$.

I now argue that a deity unable to do evil can be tempted by evil if incarnate. I first explicate (1), giving a partial account of what it is to be tempted. There is a moral as well as a modal problem about Christ's temptations; I develop that next. I then offer three accounts of how Christ could be tempted and argue that despite His inability to give in, Christ was morally responsible for resisting temptation.

¹The terms translated "tempted" in the *James* and *Hebrews* texts have the same Greek root, making the tension between them quite explicit. (My thanks here to Hugh Benson.)

²It can be morally good to bring about evil, if that evil is the least bad of one's options. I speak throughout of evil it is not morally good to bring about. One can be tempted to bring about states of affairs that really would be evil, or that it would really be evil to bring about, or that one believes would have one of these properties, or any combination of these. In what follows the difference between these does not matter, so I speak of temptation to evil indifferently.



Temptation

I begin by explicating (1). Its “cannot” opens the (1)-sentence to multiple interpretations: it might express many modalities, *de dicto* or *de re*. Plausibly James had no inkling of this, and nothing in the text hints at what he might have said had he known. But a great many modally precise claims the (1)-sentence can express make it hard to see how (1)–(4) can be consistent.³ So we need not linger over this. Let us instead focus on what it is to be tempted.

“Macbeth was tempted” can report what the witches did to him: they deliberately brought a state of affairs to mind in order to arouse his desires and thereby produce a course of action. If you accept (2) and believe that the Temptation stories report actual events in literal terms, you should not read (1) as denying that someone could tempt God to evil in this sense. Even if you don’t read the Temptation stories that way, surely nothing kept anyone from doing this to Christ, so charity forbids taking (1) and (2) to imply that no-one could have done so.

“Macbeth was tempted” could also report his meeting a situation no-one deliberately offered, which brought to mind a state of affairs apt to arouse his desires and thereby produce a course of action, e.g., seeing an accidentally-dropped wallet lying on the ground. That counts as apt to produce the relevant desires because it is the sort of thing that often does so. We surely should not take (1) and (2) to imply that Christ could not have seen a dropped money-bag.

Finally, “Macbeth was tempted” could report his entering or being in an inner state, a state of temptation, henceforth being tempted. *James*, I submit, makes a claim about God’s inner state: with respect to doing any evil, He cannot be in this condition. We ought to read texts charitably, and this is the only reading on which this text makes a plausible claim.

It would be nice if we could treat (1) by setting out what James thinks it is to be tempted. But if James had any view of this, the text does not reveal it. So we can only seek the most charitable reading—i.e., suppose that James meant to speak of whatever being tempted really is, and ask what being tempted really is. My purposes here don’t require a full analysis of this. I can make do with some of its necessary conditions.⁴ If I am tempted to eat a cookie,

- I am considering a state of affairs—my experiencing the pleasure of eating the cookie.

³There is a problem if God is tempted in no metaphysically possible world, but equally if He is tempted only in no physically possible world, given that we live in a physically possible world. If we take the necessity as *de re*, the problem is obvious. If it is *de dicto*, the individual who is God can be tempted only if this individual can cease to be God—and it is fairly plausible that anything divine would be eternally divine by nature.

⁴Here I’m indebted to suggestions by Alfred Mele and the Editor.

- I occurrently want it to obtain. If I did not want this, the state of affairs could not draw me toward doing anything. If having dispositional desires sufficed for being tempted, I could be tempted to eat in dreamless sleep, with nothing going on that is in any way related to eating or feeling pleasure. If I merely have a standing disposition to want the pleasure or an inclination to obtain it, I merely have a standing disposition or inclination to be tempted by it. I am not actually tempted by it.
- there is a type of act I believe would bring it about, namely eating the cookie.
- I occurrently want to do an act of this type.
- I also have something against eating the cookie, which is actually rendering me somewhat ambivalent about whether to eat it. If I did not, eating the cookie would not be something I am tempted to do. It would simply be something I want to do. I want to continue writing right now, but it would be strange to say that I am tempted to do so, because nothing in me resists it. I have no hesitation to overcome. I just plain want to write. A state of temptation essentially involves wanting to do the act one has in view, but also wanting or having some resolve not to do it. Thus in particular an act's being wrong is not enough to make wanting to do it constitute being tempted to do it. If I am wholeheartedly in favor of doing a wrong act, I am not tempted to do it. I simply want to do it.⁵ Only if something in me opposes it can I be tempted to do it. The opposition cannot be trivial, either. Suppose the only thing in me opposing doing wrong were a weak impulse or an intention I do not feel strongly drawn to maintain. That is, suppose I were *almost* wholeheartedly for it. Then I wouldn't be *tempted* to do wrong either. I would simply be for it, but with a slight hesitation. For my desire to do evil to count as a temptation, I must be *significantly* invested in not doing it. Whatever I have against doing it must be sufficiently forceful or important (etc.) to create at least some genuine ambivalence.
- suppose that whenever I start to want to eat the cookie, there is always something else I want to do much more, doing which is incompatible with eating it, and so I never take eating the cookie seriously. Though I want the cookie, then, eating it is never a live option. If this is so, then even though at times I satisfy all the conditions above, it would be odd to say I was ever really tempted to eat the cookie,

⁵This is true even if a deliberately offered tempting situation induced the want. The witches tempted Lady Macbeth by tempting her husband, but she was not merely tempted to have Duncan killed. She wholeheartedly wanted it done. Further, an act's being wrong or evil is not a necessary condition of being tempted to do it. I can be tempted to do a dumb stunt it is not evil or wrong to do. It may not even be unvirtuous, as the prudence it offends against need not be the moral sort.

even in a minor way. So to constitute a temptation, a desire to act must be salient: strong enough and so-related to other desires as to make doing what that desire is a desire to do a live option. Despite the salience condition, however, a desire need not be conscious to be part of a state of temptation.⁶ I may not be aware that I want to be admired, nor that this is drawing me to do a foolhardy stunt, nor that I even want to do the stunt. All the same, I could be being tempted to do the stunt. If it sounds odd to say that an unconscious desire can pose a temptation, consider that one way we can fail to be aware that we want something is by deceiving ourselves.⁷ Where a desire shames us, for instance, we *may* hide it from ourselves—and shameful desires can pose the biggest temptations. Thus temptation can be both unconscious and morally significant.

So being tempted involves at least two desires, wanting a state of affairs to obtain, and wanting to do some act(s) to bring it about. Merely wanting to feel cookie pleasure is not enough to be tempted. Temptation is to do or not do something (if only give rein to some emotion), and so being tempted takes wanting to do something, namely eat the cookie. If Noble, a good person in deep debt, is offered money to commit murder, Noble might refuse and later say, “I wanted the money badly. But I had no desire at all to commit murder. In fact the thought repelled me. So though I wanted the money, I was not at all tempted.” This could (I submit) be a correct report of not being tempted, not of overcoming temptation. Finding the state of affairs *I have the money* attractive does not entail being tempted to do what it takes to bring that state of affairs about. As there was nothing attractive about murder, Noble did not want to do the act needed to obtain the money; as a result, there was just no temptation, though Noble wanted the money. Someone who is tempted does not just want to have what is offered, but also to some extent inclines to satisfy that want, i.e., has some desire to act.⁸

Our necessary conditions for being tempted yield a plausible suggestion about why (1) is true.⁹ God has desires.¹⁰ He can want states of affairs

⁶Pace A. T. Nuyen, “The Nature of Temptation,” *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 35 (1997), 96.

⁷In whatever way self-deception is possible.

⁸The two desires could in principle have the same object: the state of affairs I desire to obtain might just be that I do an action. Even so, it is one thing to desire that an act be done by me, and another to want to do it. If I am severely agoraphobic, I may desire that an act of going outside be done by me—I might wish I could go outside—but all the same be so fearful that I do not want to go outside. I might not be motivated to go outside at all. An action-desire, a want-to-do, has to include some motivation to act. (For the concept of an action-desire, see Alfred Mele, *Motivation and Agency* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003], 16.)

⁹I cannot call it more than a plausible suggestion because I have not claimed that the conditions are jointly sufficient for being tempted. As I leave it open that there may be other conditions, I must allow that some further condition I have missed might provide a better explanation. If you think my conditions jointly sufficient, you can take this as the only available explanation.

¹⁰Or their functional equivalents. Swinburne insists that God has no desires, but acts only from purely rational considerations (Richard Swinburne, *The Christian God* [Oxford: Oxford

to obtain and want to act.¹¹ If there are reasons against actions, as omniscient He knows them. It is possible that He have enough reason to act to make an act a salient option for Him, but enough reason against to constitute significant pressure against doing it. Thus if (1) is true, plausibly what must be lacking in God is desire to do an evil act: knowing that it would be evil to do an act is sufficient for Him not to want to do it.

This has consequences. Necessarily, if an act would be evil, God knows this. Necessarily, if He knows this, He does not want to do it. So God cannot want to do an evil act. If He cannot want to do evil, He could do it voluntarily only by a wholly irrational, unmotivated choice, to do an act He believes He has sufficient reason not to do and which He in no way wants to do. This would go beyond akrasia. The weak-willed do what they want to do, despite knowing that they have more reason not to do it. This would be doing what He does not want to do, despite having no desire to do it, knowing this, and knowing that He has more reason not to do it. I'm not sure this sort of sheer perversity is really possible. But in any event, God cannot act irrationally. If so, then, God can't do evil voluntarily. So if God cannot want to do evil, He cannot do it voluntarily.¹² So our explanation of (1) implies that an impeccable God is not free to do evil.¹³

Further, as omniscient, He knows this. So we can raise another puzzle about (1)–(4): how could a perfectly rational God be tempted to do something He knows He is not free to do? How could He be tempted voluntarily to *do* something He knows He cannot do voluntarily?

The Evil of Temptation

So far, (1)–(4) have raised a modal and a freedom puzzle. I now add a specifically moral puzzle. Someone impeccable cannot deserve blame. Being tempted to evil (I shortly argue) is often blameworthy. If Christ was tempted "in all ways as we are," He met a normal human life's worth of temptations. Could a normal human life include only excusable temptations to evil? I now put this last puzzle in place by considering the blameworthiness of temptation to evil.

On one main approach to the scope of moral responsibility, we clearly can be blameworthy for being tempted toward evil. On this approach, we can deserve moral blame or praise for anything which so expresses our rational judgments and values that it is "appropriate, in principle, to

University Press, 1994], 66–67). If this is correct, His grasp of relevant reasons serves as the functional equivalent of having a desire—motivating behavior, producing pro-attitudes, etc.

¹¹Or (Swinburne again) grasp the relevant reasons and appropriately incline toward action.

¹²It should be clear that if Swinburne is right and there are no divine desires, we can adjust the argument accordingly.

¹³Some might argue that if so, He cannot be morally responsible for doing good. I disagree. See my "Necessary Moral Perfection," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 70 (1989), 240–260, and "Infinite Goodness," in *The Infinity of God*, ed. Benedikt Gocke (University of Notre Dame Press, forthcoming).

ask (us) to defend or justify it" on the basis of those.¹⁴ On this approach, we are blameworthy for many states of temptation. If I am tempted to steal Jones's million dollars, this is (we can suppose) an outflow of my underlying bad character and values. It would be appropriate to ask me to defend wanting to take the money; we might do so to begin to show that the desire expresses indefensible values. So on the "expressive" account, my temptation is blameworthy.

On the more usual approach, we can be blameworthy only for things we can control directly and immediately (e.g., what choices we make) and things with the right relation to what we can control directly and immediately. So on this account, whether we can deserve blame for being tempted depends on the relation between being tempted and our control. Being tempted is primarily a matter of having desires, and so the matter turns on the extent to which we can control our desires. We usually have little or no immediate control of desires. A desire shows up whether we want it to or not; there seems nothing we can do then about its showing up then. But we have at least two sorts of indirect control of some desires.

Over time, we can affect the desires we involuntarily start to have, by exposing ourselves to appropriate influences. We cannot immediately cause ourselves to believe what we wish, but we can alter our beliefs over the long term by appropriate exposure to evidence and argument. So too, over time, we can change some of what we want or how we want it. I could have done something about being tempted to steal Jones's million. I could have undertaken a course of moral self-improvement or spiritual direction. Over time, that might well have weakened my desire to steal or heightened my feelings against stealing to the point that stealing was no longer tempting, and could have made me not want to steal at all.

We also have some influence over whether a desire continues unabated. We can change the focus of our attention. If I am thinking about Jones's money, I can make myself think about something else. It isn't effective to tell myself not to think about Jones's money. We all know that this will cause such a thought. But I can just move on, and if the money continues to pop back to mind, I can just move on again and again. Sometimes the change sticks. If I manage to stop thinking about Jones's money, I at least demote my desire for it from conscious and salient to unconscious and less-salient. This might stop my being tempted. I can only say "might" because an unconscious desire can figure in a state of temptation. But plausibly a temptation demoted to unconsciousness is often lesser and

¹⁴Angela Smith, "Control, Responsibility, and Moral Assessment," *Philosophical Studies* 138 (2008), 369. The seminal paper here is Robert M. Adams, "Involuntary Sins," *Philosophical Review* 94 (1985), 3–31. For other views of this sort see Angela Smith, "Control, Responsibility, and Moral Assessment," 367–392, and "Responsibility for Attitudes: Activity and Passivity in Mental Life," *Ethics* 115 (2005), 236–271; T. M. Scanlon, "The Significance of Choice," in *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*, v. 8, ed. S. McMurrin (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1988), 149–216; Gila Sher, "Kantian Fairness," *Philosophical Issues* 15 (2005), 179–192, and "Out of Control," *Ethics* 116 (2006), 285–301.

currently less-pressing. Moreover, if I cease to think about Jones's money consciously, I might cease to have a specific desire for Jones's money, though I may still have a general standing occurrent non-conscious desire for any money I can get my hands on. My knowledge that Jones has a million I could grab could so recede into the background that it could be something *like* temporarily forgotten.

I directly and immediately control whether I try to affect my desires, I can try, there is a fair chance that it will work if I try, I am responsible to try, I can know all this and I am responsible to know it. Let's suppose that I knew all that, that I had good reason to think spiritual direction would at least partly succeed and that in fact, had I worked at it, my desire to steal would have vanished before I heard about Jones's money—and yet I did nothing. Then my desire to steal (or at least its intensity) is blameworthy on a control-based account, even though I cannot directly and immediately control its occurring.¹⁵ If the desire occurs or continues unabated, it is my fault. So then is my temptation to steal.

Some might say that what deserves blame here is only my voluntary omission of desire-altering measures: that the temptation itself is regrettable, a moral flaw, perhaps a sign of vice, but not strictly blameworthy. But if something happens due to my omission, it is my fault that it happens. If I am piloting a ship, I leave the wheel (omitting to control the ship), and the ship then runs aground, the grounding is my fault. We deserve blame for things that are our fault, even if our contribution to their happening is only a crucial omission. I might deserve censure merely for leaving the wheel, but I deserve more if the ship actually runs aground. So I deserve blame for being tempted if I contribute the crucial omission to this.

Suppose I learn to read minds. I read yours. I burst out with a shock, "you're lusting after my wife!"¹⁶ I am not just expressing anger and protest. I'm blaming you for your desire. I'm treating it as your fault, as something for which I legitimately rate you lower as a moral agent. I could continue, "it's wrong of you to lust after her: stop!" In this I would follow Christ, who held that lust is adultery in the mind—that is, a sin. Lust is a desire. You have no immediate voluntary control of it. But still, you are responsible not to lust, and your lusts are your responsibility even if they begin involuntarily. Lusting after my wife may well constitute part of a state of temptation to do evil. So lust can provide a case of blameworthy temptation. The more cases one can generate, the more severe the specifically moral puzzle, because the less likely it seems that a normal human life could involve only blameless temptations.

¹⁵This is just a rough, broad-brush account of a control-based sufficient condition for blameworthiness. It may be controversial even within the control-based camp and even apart from the issue about luck I go on to raise. But I need not tweak it further; if the luck problem can be handled, any plausible tweaks would not affect my main point, which is just that on control-based accounts of responsibility, sometimes being tempted is blameworthy.

¹⁶To get a "clean" case, suppose that you are not currently even trying to control yourself.

The Luck Objection

My claims court an objection from moral luck. Having moral luck consists in having factors outside your control affect what you wind up praise- or blameworthy for.¹⁷ If you are blameworthy for being tempted and you have no direct control over what desires you begin to have, it is bad moral luck to meet a situation that prompts a temptation-constituting desire, and then to have the desire. Some theorists of moral responsibility deny the existence of moral luck, arguing that anything subject to luck is *ipso facto* not our responsibility.¹⁸ If this is correct, then if it is luck that the ship runs aground or that I meet a situation that causes a temptation-constituting desire, I am not blameworthy for either.

Moral luck comes in importantly different varieties.¹⁹ The varieties raise different issues, and I cannot fully discuss even one sort in a paper primarily about something else. All I can do now is briefly argue the existence of moral luck due to consequences of our acts or omissions. Suppose I pull a pound from my wallet, intending to help Beggar 1. Beggar 2 is near, and is stronger than either I or 1. 2 can knock 1 down, seize the pound from me and run off. If 2 tries, 2 will succeed. I do not control whether 2 tries. So I do not control whether I succeed in helping 1. If I succeed, it is just good moral luck that I help 1; I happened to find 2 feeling placid. Yet I deserve praise for helping 1 even if 2 is near. For I would have deserved praise for this had 2 been nowhere near, and the mere fact that 2 is near can't make my act non-praiseworthy. If I deserve praise for it, I am morally responsible for it. So luck about the consequences of my attempt to help 1 affects what it is that I am morally responsible for: there is this sort of moral luck. Another way to make the same point: my luck about 2 determines whether I am responsible for helping 1 or only for attempting to help 1. Moral luck opponents would typically bite the bullet here and say that I am not responsible for helping 1, but only for attempting to do so.²⁰ But taken consistently, this position removes completed actions altogether as objects of moral evaluation. It removes even bodily attempts, since it is just good moral luck that my body functions well enough just then to let me pull the pound from my wallet. The position limits moral evaluation to character and intention. I suggest that this is too radical a surgery on the subject matter of ethics to accept.²¹ Another move might be to say that I deserve praise for helping a beggar, but not for helping 1 in particular.

¹⁷For the general issue, see Thomas Nagel, "Moral Luck," in *Moral Luck*, ed. Daniel Statman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 57–72.

¹⁸See e.g., Michael Zimmerman, "Luck and Moral Responsibility," *Ethics* 97 (1987), 374–386, and "Taking Luck Seriously," *Journal of Philosophy* 99 (2002), 553–576.

¹⁹See Nagel, "Moral Luck."

²⁰See e.g., Zimmerman, "Luck and Moral Responsibility," and "Taking Luck Seriously."

²¹As I've indicated, a great deal more should be said here. Ultimately, in regard to moral luck, we have a genuine conflict between strong intuitions about responsibility. There is no easy, cost-free solution to it. I hope to argue elsewhere that the cost of rejecting consequential luck is greater than the cost of admitting it.

This seems paradoxical: the only thing I did to earn praise for helping a beggar was help 1.

We can deserve praise or blame for things we do not directly and immediately control, if they bear the right relation to things we do so control. It may be bad moral luck that I meet something that provokes a desire that then constitutes a state of temptation toward evil, but I submit that if the conditions above are met, I am blameworthy for the desire's and the temptation's occurring.²² I now take up approaches to (1)–(4).

The Ambiguity Approach

One can render (1)–(4) consistent by taking “tempt” to be ambiguous in (1) and (3). (1), I’ve argued, concerns God’s inner state. On a legitimate alternate translation, *Hebrews* 4:15 tells us that Christ “was *tested* in all ways as we are.” That a test occurred is a matter of His external circumstances, not His internal state: contradiction averted. Trying to scratch a diamond tests its hardness even if it is physically impossible that the diamond fail the test. Still, I do not think we can rest with this. Even if we can tame the *Hebrews* verse, we still have the puzzle of how Christ responded to those tests, given His divine character, and whether those responses are enough like ours to undergird *Hebrews*’s further claim that He is humanly sympathetic with our tests. Henceforth, then, I read (3) as making *inter alia* claims about Christ’s internal state. I now offer three ways to understand that state.

The State-desire Approach

My first says that (3) makes two claims. One is that Christ met things that typically induce states of temptation in humans, in an amount and variety somewhere in the normal range for a human life. So He was *tested* in all ways as we are: by the same things that test us. (3) also asserts that when He met these, Christ had in many cases the very types of state-desires we have when we are tempted: He was also tested by human nature, as we are. But on my first way to understand Christ’s inner state, He did not form the corresponding act-desires, and (3) does not say that He did.²³ So my first suggestion adds to the ambiguity approach: (3) says that Christ was tested, but also makes a claim about Christ’s inner state, that He had certain state-desires but not certain act-desires.

Suppose that He did not. Then He had something *like* states of temptation, but not states of temptation strictly speaking. Still, these state-desires pressed Him toward wrongdoing as they do us. It is this pressure, the felt force of the state-desire, that in us often produces an act-desire. It’s

²²Or at least for its occurring with its full intensity, depending on the facts of the case.

²³Having state-desires for evil states or states it would be evil to bring about does not constitute wanting to bring them about (they are not act-desires) or being willing so to act (one can have a state-desire but be unwilling to do anything about it) or consenting to any degree to acting so (one can have a state-desire but have no desire to bring about the state in question).

because I first want it to be the case that I experience cookie-taste that I then want to eat the cookie. If I do form the latter desire, I now have two wants, not one, for two things, not one. But at least part of the motive force of the act-desire is just the transmitted force of the state-desire. We can see this as follows. Suppose I want to experience cookie taste, I thus want to eat the cookie, and the *only* reason I want to eat it is that I want to experience cookie-taste. (I'm not hungry. Eating is not a hobby. Etc.) If eating attracts me only as a way to experience cookie taste, eating and experiencing cookie taste do not seem better to me than just experiencing cookie taste, or have more motive force to me than the latter alone does. If the only reason I want to eat is to experience cookie taste, then for me it is as if the eating has no intrinsic value, but only an extrinsic value entirely derivative from experiencing cookie taste. If this is so, the motive force of my desire to eat cannot be greater or less than the motive force of my desire to taste, nor can the motive force of the two desires together be greater than that of the desire to taste. So the desire to eat simply transmits the force of the desire to taste. Thus I am not under more psychological pressure to eat than I would be if I just wanted to experience the taste, knowing that if I eat the cookie, I will taste it.

This shows that in ordinary cases, part of an act-desire's motive force is just the motive force of the state-desire(s) for the state(s) the act would bring about. Now in ordinary cases, we may also value doing the act, not just the state(s) the act brings about. But even in this case, motivation really comes from state-desires. If I want to do the act due *inter alia* to something about the doing of it, the state-desire that I be doing the act or enjoying whatever value the doing brings is distinct from the act-desire to do it, and the act is to realize the state, i.e., satisfy the state-desire. We act to bring about states of affairs. So act-desires' motive force just is the force of the state-desires that beget them. They transmit the force of state-desires. They do not add to it. Compare: means are for the sake of ends. So the motive force of means is just the motive force of the ends they serve, and if the means seem to have motivational force of themselves, that is because the using of the means has become partly an end itself. If all this is correct, then even if nothing produced in Christ any act-desire to do evil, if the inducements He met produced the appropriate state-desires, they pushed Christ to do evil precisely as hard as they would have pushed us. And so Christ was tested in all ways as we are, in the sense that things that psychologically press us toward evil pressed Him toward evil just as hard.²⁴

Some might object that if Christ has no act-desire to make food, the Devil's mention of obtaining bread exerts no psychological pressure.²⁵ But this just seems wrong. Christ is hungry. He feels hunger-pain. He has a

²⁴Again, the Greek root here, "πειραζω," can be translated "test" as well as "tempt." Pressure tests even if it does not strictly tempt.

²⁵So one referee.

state-desire that the state of affairs *I am fed and not in pain* be actualized: that is, He wants to be fed and pain-free. He knows that He can make food and that if He makes it, He can eat it. The want to be fed and pain-free might well intensify when the Devil directs His attention toward it, bread comes to mind and this knowledge becomes psychologically salient. That is *plenty* of pressure to make food. Wanting the end produces psychological pressure to take the means. Wanting to be fed produces psychological pressure to get food. Act-desires do not add psychological pressure to do a dirty deed. They just take us one more step down the road toward doing it: we desire the means (doing the act) as well as the end (being in the state the act will produce). If act-desires merely transmit the psychological force of the related state-desires, a desire to take the means—i.e., to do what will bring about the desired state—is not an independent source of psychological pressure.²⁶ Christ does not come to want to make food, but He does want food, and that presses Him to make it. Earlier I said that Noble, repelled by murder, was not tempted to accept the money. But Noble wanted the money badly. That did press him to accept it. Aversion kept the state-desire from producing an act-desire, but the state-desire was fierce (we can suppose), and made worse by the offer. A fierce desire is psychological pressure to have what the desire is for. Pressure to have the end is pressure to use the means, even if it doesn't produce a desire to do so.

On the present picture, Christ resists temptation at an earlier point than we usually do: that is, He aborts the move toward a bad act at a logically and perhaps temporally prior point. Inducements tend to lead us to act-desires; if they do and we resist, we resist satisfying these. On the present picture, Christ resists even forming the act-desire.²⁷ He not only resists doing what it takes to have what tempts, He resists wanting to do what it takes. Temptation presents Christ an inducement not just to act, but to want to act; He resists even the want. It presents Christ an inducement to be tempted; Christ resists being tempted. This isn't what we do when we resist temptation—we are tempted and resist doing what we're tempted to do. But it is different because it is a more complete moral achievement.

²⁶Suppose I want to have Jones's million and so form an act-desire, to steal it. Stealing may attract me also because I enjoy it. But that increment of motive force arises because of an associated state-desire: I want it to be the case that I feel the pleasure of stealing. Stealing tempts me because of more than one state-desire, not because an act-desire has a motive force of its own to contribute. Here many state-desires lead to the forming of an act-desire which transmits their joint force.

²⁷It should not sound odd to speak of resisting forming an act-desire. We can do this ourselves; we can resist forming sexual act-desires, for instance, by simply not looking at certain things, or by changing our attention as quickly as we can, or by forcing our thoughts into another path. Thus we can be blamed for not doing so, and Catholic moral theology makes "lingering delectation" of an occasion for such desires itself a sin (so e.g., Aquinas, *ST II:1*, 74, 6). It may sound odd to say that Christ resists doing something He cannot do. (It did sound odd to the Editor.) But this (I submit) gets things backward. Christ cannot do it because it is His nature to resist it.

On the present picture, then, (1)–(4) are compatible. God cannot be tempted: He cannot form act-desires to do evil. Nor can Christ. (3) speaks of testing, not tempting, and its “in all ways” makes a claim about external inducements, state-desires and degree of psychological pressure. Christ could be psychologically pressed to do something He knew He was not free to do, somewhat as a prisoner can be psychologically pressed to leave jail; He can be pressed to do what He cannot do, as a diamond can be pressed to scratch.²⁸ If Christ never formed the necessary act-desires, He never entered a full state of temptation, though He had something functionally similar. Thus there are no blameworthy states of temptation to worry about. There may be a residual worry about blameworthy state-desires. I address this below.

Restricted Temptation

My first approach makes Christ’s inner life distinctly different from ours. Some might prefer to see Him as more like us. So here is another way to deal with (1)–(4): let Christ enter into genuine full states of temptation, but take a weak reading of (3), on which its “all” does not range over all, or all sorts, or even a representative sample of sorts, of temptations humans face. If we want to restrict Christ’s states of being tempted to those for which He is not blameworthy, but allow Him temptations toward evil, we will want to show that He is not blameworthy for these. There are two broad views of the scope of moral responsibility. They agree on some classes of blameless temptation. We might therefore consider restricting Christ’s being tempted toward evil to cases that fall in these classes.

On the most common sort of view, one is morally responsible only for what either is under one’s direct, immediate control or bears some appropriate relation to what one so controls. Suppose, then, that our desires are blameworthy only if they bear some appropriate relation to our control—e.g., only if our prior voluntary actions could have controlled them without unreasonable effort. If that’s true, we often can’t be blamed for wanting what we want, even when they are bad wants to have, because there is nothing we have omitted to do which could have led by reasonable effort to our not having those desires. Perhaps the desires in Christ’s states of temptation were always of this sort. He may have been tempted in the Garden to avoid the Cross: if He was, desires to stay alive or avoid pain would have animated this. If these can be extirpated at all, the effort involved would surely be unreasonable in itself, and *a fortiori* because the result would arguably not be a good state to be in. But I suspect that these desires are just natural to humans, and so unavoidable. In the Temptation narrative, the Devil whispers, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread” (*Matthew* 4:3). If this produced a state of temptation, that was due to desire for food. That desire is surely natural and was unavoidable by

²⁸And He can resist doing what He cannot do, as a diamond can resist scratching: it cannot be scratched because it is its nature to resist that sort of pressure.

any reasonable purely human means then open to Him.²⁹ Jesus takes the challenge to jump off the Temple pinnacle as tempting Him to test God's provision for Him. Desire not to be in pain and to be fed would have animated any temptation Christ had in the desert to think that God might not always be providing for Him, and so any temptation to test this. The last desert temptation was an offer of power and glory. The desire to aggrandize oneself and lord it over others is likely part of our simian inheritance, again a matter beyond our control. So the temptations of which a Christology must take explicit account can be handled in this way.

The "expressive" account also allows this move. For desires one cannot help having do not depend on one's rationally-adopted values in any distinctive way: I will want to eat if I fast no matter what my convictions. Thus these desires do not express any value dependent on my rational judgments. It is not appropriate to ask me to rationally defend wanting to eat. Desires like this express values resistant to rational judgment or criticism: I will want to eat when hungry even if I tell myself not to do so, and this involves placing a value on eating, even if it is one against which a second-order desire or a judgment incline me.

The "expressive" approach raises another issue, as it allows that state-desires that reflect corrupt values can be blameworthy even if beyond control. Well, it's no stretch to suppose that Christ had no corrupt values. He was perfect in virtue. So (for instance) He was perfectly loving and merciful. That is not compatible with (say) placing a high value on torturing animals. Christ's suite of perfect virtues, then, plausibly would rule out bad values. But suppose He had had some. Christ might still have been blameless for the related desires and any relevant temptations in two ways, even on the "expressive" approach. Consider a case of corrupt values: suppose that because you were brought up in the Hitler Youth, you have a state-desire for the extermination of the Jewish race.³⁰ To me, it is one thing for this desire to be a defect, something to regret, and another for it to be a fit subject for blame. Suppose that you have no act-desire to help exterminate Jews, and have tried your best but failed to eliminate that state-desire: or suppose that you do have the act-desire and have similarly tried and failed. You just cannot manage to do anything about either. Then I submit that these desires are something like a moral disability imposed by your upbringing—and it is not right to blame people for their disabilities. If Christ limited Himself on earth to what He could accomplish through His human powers and by whatever prayer would

²⁹We can now deliberately avoid appetite by taking pills; a first-century Jew did not have that option. Perhaps first-century Jews knew that certain illnesses suppressed appetite and knew enough to be able to bring these on voluntarily. But that would not have been a reasonable means, because there was a fairly high likelihood that the resulting state—near-starvation plus a (further?) illness—would be worse than near-starvation plus hunger. In any case, if the Spirit's intent were to have the Son fast and be tempted by desire for food, avoiding the desire by deliberately becoming ill would have been disobedience.

³⁰The illustration is Robert M. Adams's.

unleash, He could find Himself with this sort of state-desire; liability to disability is part of being human. Suppose on the other hand that you could work to eliminate those desires, but have not, due to non-culpable ignorance about the need or the possibilities for improvement. In this case you are excused. Your condition is regrettable, but your values are an imposed disability you inculpably do not know you can help. If you inculpably do not know that your sickness is curable, it is not right to blame you for continuing to be ill. If Christ while on earth limited His access to knowledge to whatever His human nature and prayer could provide, He could find Himself with this sort of state-desire. This exculpation extends to any state of temptation these state-desires produce.

My second approach to Christ's temptations, then, asserts that all state-desires that press Him toward temptation and evil, and all His temptations, are blameless in one of the ways just sketched. This gives Him access to a representative range of human states of temptation, and lets Him enter them fully, not just stop short with state-desires. But it keeps His moral record clean. The price? Perhaps just a closer look at *James*. Here is the *James* text in context:

When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when he is dragged away and enticed by his own evil desire. Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and sin . . . to death. Don't be deceived . . . Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be . . . firstfruits of all he created.³¹

I read this as follows: God, who cannot be tempted, does not tempt to evil. Rather, He sends only good things [and so not temptation to evil]. Constancy is part of His character. As it is and He has chosen to send the good of new birth, planning to make us firstfruits, He will not so change as to lead us away from Him instead by tempting us to evil. The key point for present purposes is that the whole passage concerns the same being, the God who cannot be tempted, who is also referred to as the Father. The Father never was incarnate. Read in context, then, though the *James* text includes a sentence that would normally assert (1), *James* asserts not (1) but

1*. God unincarnate cannot be tempted by evil.

(1) is not compatible with my thesis that God incarnate *can* be tempted by evil, when it is blameless to be so. (1*) is. It is also obviously compatible with (2)–(4), which concern either us or God incarnate.

Complications of Incarnation

Let us now consider a third way to deal with (1)–(4). (1) makes a claim about God apart from the Incarnation. The Incarnation introduces complications.

³¹*James* 1:13–18.

To explain them I must say a bit about act-individuation. There are finer- and coarser-grained approaches to individuating actions. The finer the grain, the closer we get to a 1:1 pairing of descriptions with actions: use a fine enough grain and buttering my parsnips is not the same action as buttering them quickly. On a coarser-grained approach, these are two descriptions of a single action. Individuating actions coarsely, the same action can be tempting under one but not under another description. If I am hungry, it is tempting to eat the food on that plate, leaving nothing behind. Even if I am hungry, it is not tempting to eat my wife's dinner, leaving her nothing to eat. The one description engages my love and moral knowledge and assures that no action-desire arises. The other does not engage either and just leaves my animal nature to assert itself. In what follows I take a coarse-grained approach. This is purely an expository convenience. When I speak of being tempted to act under one but not another description, I could make equivalent points in terms of being tempted to do an act doing which entails (in the circumstances) doing others which are not tempting.

Now to the substantive point about the Incarnation. The orthodox view is that Christ had His full divine natural endowment while incarnate. But there has been great disagreement about how He had it, how much access He had to how much of what He had, and what special graces God bestowed on Him in His human natural endowment. Suppose that Christ while on earth prior to the Resurrection had access only to a normal human sum of knowledge—that while He had no false beliefs, He did not have the use of some divine knowledge. Suppose that He was then voluntarily operating with one hand tied behind His back cognitively, doing all His processing with a human brain and only as much information as that brain could acquire from its environment. Then He could think of an action under a description and not have His omniscience bring all its other descriptions to His immediate attention. In particular, He could think of it under a description which did not make its moral qualities salient, and not have a morally salient description of it also come at once to mind if this was not blameworthy. Then for the period in which it was not blameworthy not to have a morally relevant description of the action in mind, perhaps it would not be culpable to want to do even an evil action. Ignorance excuses; so does inability to access knowledge one possesses, which is functionally and morally equivalent to ignorance. By becoming incarnate, the Son became (so to speak) subject to a glitch due to finite processing capacity and speed in the human natural endowment to which He bound Himself. God the Son would not be culpable for enduring this glitch if He had non-culpable reasons to become incarnate, nor then culpable for cognitive and other consequences the glitch imposes—including temptation. In fact, morally sufficient reasons to become incarnate would have to include morally sufficient reasons to suffer temptation, if it is sufficiently likely that if incarnate He would be tempted. Thus if the glitch alone makes it possible for a pre-Resurrection Christ to be tempted to do evil, He would not be culpable for being tempted. By becoming incarnate,

the Son gave up a measure of control over His desires. He let it become the case that a human natural endowment could force desires on Him before His divine personality could get into the act. One can be blameworthy for the consequences of giving up control, as one is for hitting a child while driving drunk. But whether one is blameworthy depends on why one gave up control. If one got drunk and drove merely to feel good, one deserves blame. If one got drunk and drove because someone threatened credibly to kill two children unless one did, hitting the child is still tragic, but one is excused for doing so. So it matters that the Son's reasons for giving up control be morally praiseworthy, and if they are, perhaps that's all we need say.

It is not a psychological impossibility to want or even try to do an action one cannot do, if one is not thinking of that about it which makes it impossible to do or thinking that anything makes it impossible to do. Perhaps Goldbach's Conjecture is false. If it is, no-one can prove it. But as long as this is unknown, mathematicians will be able to want to prove it and be tempted to prove it. For being tempted is just a matter of what desires etc. one has, and as I've just noted, one's desires need not line up with the facts about one's abilities. Thus on the "glitch" approach, the pre-Resurrection Christ could want to do what the unincarnate Son cannot do.

God the Son cannot form a desire to do evil if not incarnate. While incarnate, He has the attitudes and personality which guarantee this result if He is not incarnate. But attitudes etc. can manifest differently depending on the conditions under which they operate. They can if nothing else take longer to manifest because having to work through a limited human endowment rather than an unincarnate God's psychology. Perhaps this allows the formation of conscious desires to do what are *de facto* evil acts, which endure for brief periods while morally salient descriptions of those acts are on the way to consciousness. If it does, it allows for act-desires the Son must resist—and will resist once the appropriate bit of His knowledge is humanly on-line. If this is true, God the Son could indeed be tempted to do evil just as we can be, at least for brief periods. Christ's divine personality and attitudes would guarantee that the moral and the dimension of relation to His Father would quickly come to mind, quickly enough to forestall a move toward doing any evil. It would also guarantee that He not want to do any act under a description which made its evil salient.

Here too, then, we replace (1) with

1*. God unincarnate cannot be tempted by evil.

We then take (2)–(4) to point out that the special conditions of the Incarnation permit divine temptation to do evil due to limitations of the Son's human nature.³² This works because His reasons for being able to be

³²These limitations make us less able than a perfect being is and render even a perfect being liable to temptation when under them. Does it follow that being finite in these respects is an imperfection? If it does, then humans who are not incarnations of divine Persons are

tempted toward evil excuse Him for being tempted. This third approach also makes Christ's temptations blameless, but offers a different reason they are so and thus lets His temptations involve a wider variety of state- and act-desires.

Is There a Problem about Perfection?

One can raise a question here. Being tempted to do evil can include having desires it is bad to have. Even if one is not blameworthy for them, they are moral imperfections. God is morally perfect. A morally perfect being has no moral imperfections. So perhaps even blameless temptations are incompatible with Christ's divine character. I offer three replies to this.

One is that this argument takes the doctrine of divine moral perfection too far. As I parse it, moral perfection requires perfect virtue and having no unmet obligations.³³ It does not go beyond that. This argument unfairly moves the goalposts.

Another is that for a God morally perfect if not incarnate to let Himself suffer bad desires while incarnate is lowering Himself for love's sake. Doing so is thus actually admirable. If it is, its consequences cannot be viewed as things it would be better not to suffer *in the circumstances*, i.e., given the reason for which they are suffered. On the contrary, the worse they are, the more admirable He is for suffering them, and so the better it is (in one respect) that He suffer them. If I let the crowd pelt me with filth to earn your freedom, you upon release from jail should see the stains on my clothing as marks of honor rather than things to sniff at. So too, then, we might honor Christ rather than downgrade Him for being tempted. Further, ability and willingness to lower oneself for love may then turn out to be part of true moral perfection.

One might also answer in terms of a compositional model of the Incarnation. Perhaps the doctrine of divine moral perfection is really with regard to intrinsic moral qualities. On a compositional model, the Incarnation adds a body and soul to God the Son, composing a three-part whole, rather than (say) His somehow turning into one or both. On such a model, imperfections the Son incurred due to composition with the body and soul of Jesus would be extrinsic—because the body and soul are added to the Son. Extrinsic bad desires are compatible with perfection in all intrinsic moral properties.

Freedom, Responsibility and Resisting Temptation

If God cannot do evil, Christ had to resist His temptations. Perhaps the manner was up to Him, but the result was not. That poses the question of how His doing so could be free and morally responsible. This is no idle matter. If it was not, He did not have a freely, responsibly achieved sinless

essentially imperfect *beings*, even if they are perfect *humans*. To me that is not an implausible claim. Surely no human who is not an incarnation of a divine Person is a perfect being.

³³See my "God's Deontic Perfection," *Res Philosophica* 90 (2013), 69–95.

life to offer to God, and taking Him as a moral exemplar is a bit like taking a robot as one.

I now suggest that on either main approach to the scope of moral responsibility, Christ is morally responsible for resisting His temptations.

On the “expressivist” account, I am responsible for whatever appropriately expresses my rational judgments, values or character. It does not matter that I cannot do otherwise; I am responsible because the act is a genuine outflow (in the circumstances) of my real self. Well, Christ’s resistance was a genuine outflow of His real self, though He could not have done otherwise. So on this sort of account, He is morally responsible for not giving in.

I now argue that this is so on a control-based account too. Suppose that I see a leper and want to bathe his sores, but am paralyzed by disgust. I want to bathe them. I want to act on that want. But my first-order desire not to touch sores keeps me from acting; the closer I get to the sores, the more disgusted I become, and so no matter how much I want to help, I cannot. Fortunately, I have a Mother Theresa pill. I know that if I take it, I will be unable to resist bathing the sores of the next leper I see. I am now fairly far from the leper, and so my disgust is not so intense as to keep me from acting on my desire to act on my desire to help. So I momentarily focus only on my desire to help the leper, pushing disgust aside. I take the pill while gazing at the leper, and presto: leper gets relief. I cannot do otherwise. The wonders of chemistry and my current sensory input determine my action. Still, I submit that I am responsible for what I do. Fully foreknowing what would ensue, I voluntarily made myself unable to do otherwise. I intended to do the act. I had to make myself unable to do otherwise in order to act successfully on that intention. So I did so, and my prior intention—formed when I *could* do otherwise—governed my behavior. That I could not do otherwise at the time does not make the act involuntary or unintentional: I volunteered for it by taking the pill, and it is because I intended to do it that I took the pill. So my lack of alternatives does not remove my responsibility. It leaves me praiseworthy. I wanted to help the leper. I intended to do so. I had the ability to avoid doing so when I formed the intention and so acted on it as to realize it. The only thing unusual about my generation of my action is that I passed up my chance to do otherwise not at the time of the act, but earlier. Why should that affect how well you think of me for bathing the leper’s sores, if you know the whole story? Perhaps you will think that I would have been more praiseworthy had I overcome mounting disgust step by step, with ever greater difficulty, as I approached the leper. Instead, you may think, all I overcame was the level of disgust I had when I took the pill. But I *suffered* just the amount of disgust I would have suffered otherwise. Further, I overcame it—I kept walking toward the leper—with just the effort I would have exerted otherwise, with the degree of effort I would have had in mustering it. It is just that I could not help but exert that effort. That is how the pill works. In a sense, my suffering was worse: for I suffered

knowing that I was helpless to turn back and find relief, knowing that even worse was in the offing and could not be avoided. I let myself in for this fully foreknowing that I would feel so (we can suppose). In relation to suffering and overcoming disgust, then, the precise basis for my desert of praise is nonstandard, but it is not obviously less than in the usual case.

In like manner, God can be responsible for satisfying obligations though He cannot do otherwise at the time, if He freely chose to make Himself unable to do otherwise then. His nature requires Him to fulfill His obligations. But it is up to Him whether He takes on any obligation He ever has to a human. If He does take one on, His doing so is His taking a Mother Theresa pill. He takes on the obligation to do an act voluntarily, because He wants to fulfill it, knowing what will ensue, while able to do otherwise. (He can avoid doing the obligatory act by avoiding the obligation.) He thus makes Himself unable to refrain from the obligatory act. But as in my leper case, He is responsible for that act because of the conditions under which He gave up His ability not to do it.

I now apply this to the Son. I suppose that the Son freely chose to become incarnate.³⁴ Let's suppose to simplify discussion that He did so knowing that if He did, He would face temptation and be unable not to resist. Even so, He had a choice about whether to resist this temptation. He had no choice about whether He would resist it if it arose—His nature settled that. But He had a choice about whether it would arise, and that was His choice about whether He would resist. He intended to resist. He voluntarily made Himself unable to do other than resist. He had to make himself unable not to resist in order to act successfully on His intention. So He did so, and His prior intention—formed when He *could* avoid resisting—governed His behavior. That He could not do otherwise at the time does not make the act involuntary or unintentional. He volunteered for it by becoming incarnate, and it is because He intended *inter alia* to do it that He became incarnate. So His lack of alternatives does not remove His responsibility. It leaves Him praiseworthy. He wanted and intended to

³⁴If the sort of freedom involved includes having alternate possibilities of action, this might require that the Father did not command Him to do so, but instead asked in a way that left Him able to refuse. But we have no reason to think otherwise. (That He was commanded to submit to crucifixion if incarnate does not entail that He was commanded to become incarnate.) Still, for the decision to involve ability to refuse the Father's request, it must also be the case that the Son's perfectly loving nature would not compel Him to say yes, either for love of the Father or for love of us. Son and Father have access to precisely the same reasons favoring the Incarnation, and the very love of us pushing the Father to ask for the Incarnation is in the Son pushing Him to do it; further, the Father's love for and knowledge of the Son might well preclude His ever asking of the Son something the Son would have most reason to refuse. How then could it be that the Father could ask this, and the Son decline? I argue in work in progress that God was able to refrain from creating. If He did not create, He would not become incarnate. If the Father proposed to the Son a plan which included creation and the Incarnation, the Son's ability to decide against creating would also be an ability to decide against becoming incarnate. That creation and the Incarnation were in fact tied in God's providential plan is not a novel theological thought. For an account of how becoming incarnate can be a responsible act if the Father commands the Son to do it, see my "Infinite Goodness."

resist. He had the ability to avoid doing so when He formed the intention. He passed up His chance to do otherwise not at the time of the act, but earlier. If this does not remove praiseworthiness in the leper case, it should not do so here. For Him, the alternative to resisting is not giving in, but never having been incarnate. I don't see why this should affect the point at issue. Suppose I know that I will give in to temptation if I enter a situation. I want not to give in. So I make sure I never enter the situation. This is a legitimate strategy for avoiding giving in, and it leaves me responsible for not giving in. I use the strategy because I know my sole alternatives are giving in and not being in the situation, and I want not to give in. For the Son, the sole alternatives are not giving in and not being in the situation, and He wants not to give in. If He chooses to be in the situation because He wants not to give in, how does this leave Him less responsible for not giving in than I am in choosing not to be there in order not to give in?

On the control-based approach, Christ is derivatively responsible for not giving in to temptation because He chose freely and with appropriate knowledge to make Himself unable to give in. If we understand Christ's every moral choice on this model, further, this also gives us a way Christ could have a responsibly achieved sinless life to offer to the Father, despite His inability to do otherwise.

How Christ Resisted Temptation

Hebrews 4:15 may also imply that Christ responded to His temptations just as we might. If He did, this is a claim that the actual causal sequence generating His action contains no interventions by His divine natural endowment, that He acted only with human power and such help as a human might in principle have from other divine Persons. Here's one way it might have gone. Christ has a 40-days' hunger, and the Devil tempts Him *inter alia* to make some bread. He thinks of bread. His stomach rumbles; He salivates. He suffers a desire to be fed, or even a desire to make bread. If Christ was without sin, He suffered these up to, but not to, the point of culpability, and stopped short. But He does not move even slightly down the path to bread-making. Either He wants to make bread only till it comes to mind that this would contravene a divine command to fast, or He entertains the thought of having bread without inclining to make bread. The latter is psychologically possible because He always has uppermost in His mind His relation to His Father, and His Father's command to fast: His knowledge that He ought not to eat. His knowledge of the relevant good is complete, though human. He does not waver in His focus on it. Love of the Father gives Him the force of will not to be practically irrational and ignore what He knows, even slightly. So out of love, He resists that desire, or resists even having that act-desire, in His resistance drawing on no power that is more than human. That Christ had a divine nature, the natural endowment of God, does not entail that this endowment came into play in His resisting sin. While on earth, the

Son voluntarily foreswore use of His distinctively divine powers.³⁵ He met temptation only with the resources of His human body and soul. He summoned up reserves of human willpower, out of perfect but human love. Everything He did, we could do, in much the same way.

Further, it was as hard for Him as for any of us. His desire to be fed had a certain force. That force required precisely as much counter-force to resist as it would for us, though perhaps in His case what He is resisting is the pressure to form an act-desire rather than pressure communicated through an act-desire. If He drew only on human reserves, it was no easier for Him to summon up the counter-force than it is for us. If it takes all the willpower He has in His human endowment, it is no easier for Him to exercise this than for anyone else, even if perhaps He reaches for it with greater alacrity. That effort of willpower was resistance. That it had to succeed does not entail that it was easy for it to succeed, or that it had to succeed in the way I'm supposing it did, i.e., entirely without aid pumped in from His divine side.

A hard issue lurks beneath the surface here. Just how much did Christ have in His human toolkit before the Resurrection, and did it give Him any advantages in resisting temptation? We will probably never know. If the goal of the Incarnation is in part to give Adam's race a chance to get right what Adam got wrong, it is compatible with this that He have as much love, knowledge and certainty of the good as an unfallen man would have—this gives Him no advantages over Adam. If the goal is in part to give us as we now are an exemplar, one may suspect that the more Christ had in His toolkit that we do not, the less He meets that goal. Yet it would be easier to explain His actual sinlessness without drawing His divine nature into the explanation if He had more in the box than the average human.³⁶

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³⁵Save perhaps in working certain miracles; He might e.g., have prayed to the Father with the result that the Father temporarily let the Son's own power flow through into His human nature.

³⁶My thanks to Al Mele, the editor and referees, and audiences at Florida State University, the University of Oklahoma, and the Institute of Philosophy (Prague) for comments on earlier versions of this material.